AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please replace the claims, including all prior versions, with the listing of claims below.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A method~~Method~~ for fabricating a semiconductor structure ~~having the steps of~~, comprising:

providing a semiconductor substrate ~~(10)~~;

providing a plurality of trenches ~~(G11, G12; G21)~~ in the semiconductor substrate ~~(10)~~ using a first hard mask ~~(50)~~, which trenches are arranged offset with respect to one another in rows ~~(r1, r2)~~ and columns ~~(s1, s2, s3)~~;

causing the hard mask ~~(50)~~ to recede by a predetermined distance ~~(A)~~ with respect to ~~the~~a trench wall at ~~the~~a top side ~~(OS)~~ of the semiconductor substrate ~~(10)~~ for ~~the purpose of~~ forming a first hard mask ~~(50')~~ that has been caused to recede;

providing an isolation trench structure ~~(ST)~~ in the semiconductor substrate ~~(10)~~ using a second hard mask ~~(HM)~~, the isolation trench structure ~~(ST)~~ subdividing the first hard mask ~~(50')~~ that has been caused to recede along the rows ~~(r1, r2)~~ into strip sections ~~($50_1'$, $50_2'$; $50_3'$)~~ and the strip sections ~~($50_1'$; $50_3'$)~~ of adjacent rows ~~(r1, r2)~~ being arranged offset with respect to one another;

the receding process resulting in a reduction of an overlap region ~~(KB')~~ between two strip sections ~~($50_1'$; $50_3'$)~~ of adjacent rows ~~(r1, r2)~~ in comparison with an overlap region ~~(KB)~~ which would be present without the receding process;

removing the second hard mask ~~(HM)~~; and

filling and planarizing the isolation trench structure ~~(ST)~~ with a filling material ~~(FI)~~ using the first hard mask ~~(50')~~ subdivided into the strip sections ~~($50_1'$, $50_2'$; $50_3'$)~~.

2. (Currently amended) The method~~Method~~ according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the trenches ~~(G11, G12; G21)~~ each have a trench capacitor with a corresponding filling ~~(20)~~, which is sunk with respect to the top side ~~(OS)~~ of the semiconductor substrate ~~(10)~~.

3. (Currently amended) The method~~Method~~ according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the receding process is realized by an isotropic, ~~preferably~~ wet-chemical, etching process, as a result of which ~~the~~ a thickness of the first hard mask ~~(50')~~ that has been caused to recede is reduced in comparison with ~~the~~a thickness of the hard mask ~~(50)~~.

4. (Currently amended) The method~~Method~~ according to ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~claim 1, wherein the first hard mask ~~(50)~~ is composed of silicon nitride.

5. (Currently amended) The method~~Method~~ according to ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~ claim 1, wherein the second hard mask ~~(HM)~~ is composed of silicon oxide.

6. (Currently amended) The method~~Method~~ according to ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~claim 1, wherein the filling material ~~(FI)~~ is composed of silicon oxide.

7. (Currently amended) The method~~Method~~ according to ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~claim 1, wherein the receding process results in ~~complete~~ elimination of an overlap region ~~(KB')~~ between two strip sections ~~($50_1'$; $50_3'$)~~ of adjacent rows ~~(r1, r2)~~.